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Social Development and Urban Poverty

Proceedings of a Workshop Held at the Kentucky Hotel, Harare, Zimbabwe

22 – 26 February, 1993

School of Social Work, Zimbabwe

Social Development and Urban Poverty

Paper presentations and edited proceedings of a Workshop held in Harare, Zimbabwe 22nd – 26th February, 1993

edited by Nigel Hall

Urban Poverty and Fieldwork

Social Development Training with Special Reference to Fieldwork (includes Panel Presentations)

Group Discussions, Conclusions and Appendices

Aims and Focus of Workshop

Workshop on Social Development and Urban Poverty

Dates: February 22 – 26, 1993

Venue: Kentucky Airport Hotel, Harare, Zimbabwe

Contact: Editor, Journal of Social Development in Africa, School of Social Work, P Bag 66022, Kopje, Zimbabwe, Tel: 750815.

Sponsors: Overseas Development Administration (British Development Division Central Africa)

Organisers: Journal of Social Development in Africa, School of Social Work

Participants: To be drawn from Southern African countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Also participants from University College, Swansea.

Aims of the Workshop:

a) To discuss issues of social development with specific reference to urban poverty.
b) To facilitate an exchange of experiences on problems of poverty in southern Africa.
c) To examine the social consequences of structural adjustment programmes, especially as they relate to urban poverty.
d) To discuss the implications of urban poverty for social work education and practice, in particular, fieldwork.

Focus of the Workshop:

- The Workshop will focus on the problem of urban poverty, looking at issues such as definition of problems, intervention strategies, social policy, the way forward, analysis of students' experiences while on fieldwork, etc.
- Country structural adjustment and economic reform programmes will be reviewed.
- The Workshop will also address the issue of popular participation and accountability, with the objective of making central and local governments more accountable than they are.
- Specific services such as housing, health, community services, personal social services, social security, research, etc, will be evaluated in their relation to urban poverty.
- Fieldwork, with its implications for social work education and practice, will be examined.

Papers will be two-pronged:

a) Focus on country with discussion of urban poverty, extent of problem, intervention strategies, etc.
b) Focus on fieldwork regarding its role in training social workers and urban development; and social development training with special reference to fieldwork.

"The Place of Fieldwork in Social Work Training"

Esther Kanduza *

> *"... Substantial field practice under competent field teachers is a necessary part of training for social work. This seems to me crucial. There is no other way so far discovered to close the gap between knowledge and ability, but to use it in practice* (Younghusband, 1979:114).

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss several concepts and issues that are important in understanding fieldwork in social work training. The paper will also include a case study of the Swaziland Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders (SACRO). Reflection on the relationship between fieldwork in SACROs social work programmes can take many directions. What has been implied in this discussion is that the social work profession is multi-faceted. Fieldwork should equally be multi-faceted becaus it constitutes the professional life after people have graduated from their training programmes. SACROs programmes are broad and varied. A fieldwork attachment with SACRO would expose students to all of the programmes, and then focus on a particular area of interest. SACROs programmes offer challenges on how to recognise and prioritise the nature of urban poverty, and then attempt to develop appropriate intervention strategies.

Younghusband's (1979) quote still holds water today. Indeed there is no short-cut to becoming an effective social work practitioner, except through taking up the fieldwork placement. Fieldwork in social work refers to the practical work experience given to a student. Pettes (1979) states that *"the student learning will face responsibility in a live situation" (p 59), and further indicates that fieldwork " is used ... in educational terminology as compared to academic work" (p 59).* Several researchers have documented the importance of students having experiential learning before embarking on their work experience (Abramson & Fortune, 1990; Rogers & McDonald, 1992; Raskin, et al, 1991; Strom, 1991). The purpose of fieldwork is to allow students to see in reality what has been theoretically learnt can be applied in the field.

Fieldwork is universally considered an important element in social work education. Most schools of social work in both developed and developing countries have ensured that fieldwork *"maintains the accountability for the quality experience"* (Raskin, et al, 1991:27). Indeed the social work profession has recognised the importance of field education to students in *"integration of professional knowledge, values and skills"* (Abramson & Fortune, 1990:273).

Historical Overview

American and British social work education has had a crucial influence in the expansion of social work and welfare services in Africa. Social work history dates back to the Victorian days when much of charity work was carried out by volunteers who mostly were not trained. As society became more complex with the onset of serious social problems, there was a need for professional welfare workers. The initial training efforts were conducted by the Charity Organisation Society.

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Later training activities were taken over by universities. In the early Twentieth Century, training was confined to casework because much of the work then involved working with individuals and families. Many social workers worked as Probation Officers, Almoners or Psychiatric Social Workers.

Over the years, changes have taken place and social workers are gaining knowledge, skills and values through a variety of social work processes, including Community Development, Social Work Planning, Social Work Research, Social Group Work and Social Action (Specht & Vickery, 1979). Experience has taught us that social workers in African countries work at three levels: individual, group and community. When one is still undergoing training one does not know where she/he will end up in terms of employment. As a result, experiential learning at all the levels becomes imperative so that one is not lost when employed, especially if involved with an agency that has only one orientation towards working with people. In fact, social work practitioners generally will always encounter all three levels wherever they may be working.

Fieldwork Preparation

There are a number of things that need to be done before the student embarks on fieldwork. First of all the student is expected to work out his/her learning needs and learning objectives. Then he/she has to consider the suitability of the placement and the opportunity for his/her learning needs to be met. Sometimes students rush into choosing some placements only to find out later that very little is offered to meet their learning objectives. Such placements become a bore and offer no learning opportunities for the student.

The field coordinator, usually a faculty member, explores the possibility of fieldwork placements with prospective agencies and informs the students about these possibilities (Pettes, 1979). It is important too that the student also explores these possibilities. Most important of all is to ensure that there will be someone willing to supervise the placement, and is committed to the social work profession.

A common practice in many agencies, particularly in Western universities preparing to offer field instruction, is to interview prospective students for placements so as to establish the best fit for learning opportunities. Once this is done the prospective agencies will be in a position to decide whether or not to take the student and plan for the eventual start of placement. Two types of placements can be made available to students: concurrent placements and block placements. Concurrent placement is where students attend classes and have field placements on other days. Block placement refers to field placement done on a block of days fo a specific period (Raskin, et al, 1991).

Fieldwork Supervision and the Supervisor

According to Pettes (1979) supervision is a *"...process by which one social work practitioner enables another social work practitioner who is accountable to him to practice to the best of his ability"* (p3). Further, this definition entails a series of interactions and interventions in which the social worker is engaged to reach the desired goals. The interactions and interventions are planned and purposeful. Use of social work knowledge and skills is very essential to supervision as the supervisor will be involved with social work problems (Pettes, 1979). Supervision is indeed an important aspect of field experience and of professional life.

Generally the supervisor is expected to be a professional social worker. The Council of Social Work Education (CSWE, cited in Strom, 1991) recommended that *"...all social work interns receive supervision from a field instructor who possesses a professional graduate degree from an accredited*

social work programme" (p 87). The supervisor must be competent and be able to understand and communicate effectively with the student (Pettes, 1979). Above all, the supervisor must be prepared to teach and have time to spare for supervision, which may involve weekly supervisory sessions, assigning cases/projects to students, and reading student's recording (Pettes, 1979). The CSWE (1988) emphasises that the field instructor should be assessed for his/her commitment to social work values (cited in Strom, 1991).

However, in reality, we find that field instructors are also drawn from those who are not social work trained, eg, psychologists, psychiatrists and educationists. In an exploratory study to find out whether differences existed between trained and non-trained social workers, the researcher was unable to determine any differences and thus the *"...mandate for social worker-provided field instruction"* (Strom, 1991:94) has been questioned. Yet one is compelled to say that for the successful educational process to take place, a competent field instructor is indeed required.

Another study (Abramson & Fortune, 1990) noted that students who were placed with trained field instructors were pleased with them because they demonstrated expected supervisory behaviour more often than untrained supervisors.

The writer argues that whether trained social worker or not, commitment to social work values is critical. The untrained field instructors have to demonstrate that they are committed to social work principles, coupled with a valid knowledge base. The implication, then, is that Schools of Social Work should make provision for imparting specific skills required for the teaching of social work (Abramson & Fortune, 1990). These could take the form of seminars, workshops and other professional interactions. In most Schools of Social Work in the Western world, this is being done to prepare field instructors for competent supervision.

The content of such seminars include:

> *"orientation of students; relationship of school and field; structure of supervision; assessment of students' learning needs, educational theory, development of learning agreements, development of assignments, creation of climate for learning, utilisation of process recording or other methods, to monitor student work, socialisation of students to the profession; evaluation and termination"* (Abramson & Fortune, 1990:274-275).

These authors, in their study to assess the effectiveness of the new field instructors' training, found that seminars are the most effective teaching method in ensuring that social work skills are imparted to students.

Problems in Fieldwork Supervision

In social work practice it has been assumed that significant learning takes place during the field placement. There are many characteristics which are very distinctive and may not be found in a classroom situation. Notably it is the supervisor and student relationship in supervisory relationship (Kolevzon, 1979). The supervisory role assumes a dominant role in the assimilation and application of the values, knowledge and skills of social work practice (Kolevzon, 1979). Kadushin (cited Kolevzon, 1979) talked about the stresses that could arise in the supervisory process. In addition, supervision is a threat to the student who is striving for self-reliance as the supervisor controls the whole situation. Such controls would ultimately betray students confidence which makes the student feel insecure in the supervisory situation.

Another problem found in fieldwork supervision is lack of proper guidance for supervisors from the Schools of Social Work. For example, the writer had three experiences where she supervised

students from outside the countries where she resided. No contacts whatsoever were made by the Schools to assist in the process of supervision. The writer mostly relied on her own experiences as a student in order to impart social work knowledge, skills and values.

There are yet other supervisory problems that affect Africa's Schools of Social Work. As documented by Raskin, et al (1991), these were lack of qualified field instructors, quality of placements and socio-political concerns.

Fieldwork Teaching

Process recording has been identified as the most important way in which the field instructor teaches the student to understand what she/he is doing. The field instructor is also able to know how the student is getting on with her/his assignments. In process recording the student is expected to present an accurate account of what happened in the situation that she/he has been dealing with and this entails some analysis of the situation. In turn the student discusses the process record with the supervisor (Baldock, 1974).

From the outset the student must understand why she/he is recording and what is to be recorded. There have been arguments for and against process recording, however, for the purpose of field instruction it is imperative that process recording is done in order to enhance learning. Lund & Harte (1979) identified the use if audio-visual materials, group discussions and field trips as important teaching methods. Other methods include: role-playing and giving assignments related to fieldwork.

Content of Field Teaching

Pettes (1979) has identified three things to be taught: knowledge, skill and self-awareness, which are all crucial to field instruction. In terms of knowledge, for example, the student needs to know about human behaviour which he/she may later use in practice. Skill refers to knowledge that is applied, for instance interviewing, listening and communication. As far as interviewing is concerned, students will be taught the skill on how to ask questions, when and what type of questions. Self-awareness will help the student to learn how his/her feelings and actions are important in working with people and how these may affect his work.

Administration is another area which the field instructor must pay attention to. This is a learning opportunity for the student who may not know about agency functioning. The student will explore the agency policies and other administrative process.

Evaluation

Evaluation is carried out in order to assess how well the learning has been achieved (Pettes, 1979). Both the supervisor and the student stop the "vehicle" (ie, fieldwork) in order to see how they have been "driving". Evaluation is an ongoing process which indeed forms part of the student's learning. Thus the purpose of evaluation is to:

> *"(i) judge the student's work and progress, and*
> *(ii) to ensure that his/her educational needs are met"* (Pettes, 1974: 34).

Sometimes Schools of Social Work do offer guidance to field instructors on the criteria to be used to assess the students. Pettes (1979) maintains that the student *"...should be evaluated upon what he has been taught and/or had an opportunity to demonstrate in his practice* (p 133).

It is the responsibility of the student to submit a final report which will analyse the objectives and whether these were met or not. The report should be able to highlight achievements, failures and constraints. Reports enable the field co-ordinator, the field instructor and the student to understand the experience.

The Case Study

The discussion above centred on fieldwork and its various components in social work training. However, we need to relate the discussion to the theme of the Workshop through a case study of the Swaziland Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders (SACRO). SACRO is a locally -initiated non-governmental organisation involved in community-based programmes aimed at the prevention of crime and rehabilitation of offenders, especially juveniles. SACRO has had two fieldwork students on placement – one from Zambia (Kalapula, 1992) and another from Holland.

The work of the organisation is carried out through four programmes. The Youth Programme which deals with deprived children/youths; the Extra-Mural Penal Employment whose main objective is to divert minor offenders away from prison which should be reserved for serious offenders; the Workshops Programme which enhances the earning potential of offenders and high risk groups by providing them with skills in leather work, carpentry, fence-making and upholstery; and Juvenile Justice Development whose main objective is to reduce recidivism amongst convicted youth.

The majority of the clientele of these four Programmes are the disadvantaged populations of both rural and urban areas of Swaziland. In this paper the urban situation in which the Youth Programme conducts its activities is discussed. The towns involved are: Mbabane and Manzini which were recently accorded city status, with a population of 36,000 and 40,000 respectively. They are the biggest urban centres in the country and also reflect all major developments in the country. The concentration of development in these centres is paralleled by growing poverty because not everyone meets their aspirations.

Fifty percent of the population of Swaziland is under 20 years. The labour market is stagnant and unemployment is quite high amongst young people. Housing in the urban areas is very unsatisfactory because provision has not kept pace with the housing requirements, due to rapid urban growth (Szal and Van de Hoeven, 1976). Juvenile crime, though not documented, is on the increase and this has become a major constraint on the present and future social and economic development of Swaziland. The continuous influx of people from rural to urban areas has exacerbated social problems and these have inevitably affected the quality of life among the people. All these are manifestations of urban poverty, and indeed the urban poor in Swaziland are in difficult circumstances.

Poverty refers to a situation where people are *"...deprived of the condition of life which ordinarily define membership of society"* (Hanmer and Statham, 1988). In Swaziland the majority of families are below the poverty datum line. A 1974 study for Manzini area revealed that the poverty datum line was R81; whereas the average wage for unskilled males was R23 and for females, R11 (Fransman, 1974). Many years have passed since this study, however, it is strongly believed that the situation has not changed for the better. Most people are still poor.

SACRO deals with families and individuals, for example, street children, juvenile offenders, orphaned, neglected and abandoned children, and these are amongst the urban poor. Concerted efforts have been made to work with individuals, groups and communities in advocating community participation which allows people to make their own decisions. Midgley (1986:10) aptly puts it this way:

> *"Participation requires face-to-face involvement and ultimate control over decisions that effect (peoples') own welfare. Since participation must involve the whole community ,the disadvantaged must be empowered to take an active part in the political process".*

Social development indeed can be facilitated if people participate fully in making decisions that affect their lives. To empower the communities which SACROs Youth Programme is working with, Youth Organisers have been trained in a variety of skills: communication skills, literacy skills, groupwork skills and many other relevant areas. The training is intended to make available useful information to enable them tackle community or group situations with confidence and better knowledge.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Development

The social work profession is somewhat unique because of its concern for the total functioning of a person and its challenges to bring about change in the structure of society and its institutions. For a long time social work commitment has been dealing with people who are oppressed, powerless and disadvantaged (Kanduza, 1988). Chandler (cited in Kanduza, 1988) states: *"the social development perspective can revitalise the profession's commitment to these concerns ... social work still has an important role in working with such groups"* (p 66).

Students on fieldwork will inevitably find themselves working with these client groups at various levels including: casework, groupwork, community organisation, social planning, social work research and now social development. Both social work and social development literature emphasises the need for a fair distribution of resources, participatory decision-making and improved quality of life amongst the people. Social work educators, therefore, should incorporate the social development perspective in their courses. Fieldwork experiences which will help students appreciate the culture of the people they work with and enable the people express their needs and priorities are also very important. Students should be able to analyse critically the needs of the people in order to work out strategies likely to meet these needs. Research in the social development field in order to keep abreast with current changes and problems should be encouraged. Schools of Social Work should maintain a close contact with various agencies in the community, particularly those that will take students for attachments. Provision of training to field instructors is very crucial so that they are kept abreast of the new trends in social work practice. Thus Schools of Social Work and agencies need to improve their relationships and contacts because such contacts will ensure that Schools stay tuned to the relevant issues affecting communities.

Conclusion

The paper has discussed the fieldwork experience as an important part of the curriculum because it provides application of theory to practice. It is necessary for all students who are preparing to become social workers because significant learning takes place here. Most clients dealt with by social workers are from poverty-stricken homes as suggested in the case study; therefore, there is a need to emphasise social development so that people are able to improve their quality of life.

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